

VZCZCXRO4618
OO RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #0094/01 0221548
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 221548Z JAN 07
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5855
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 000094

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/FO, AF/SE, AF/SPG, AND AF/RSA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/21/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [SOCI](#) [US](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: TIME TO TEST PRESIDENT BASHIR ON DARFUR

Classified By: CDA Cameron Hume, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: U.S. policy in Sudan is blocked on three fronts. This message, the first in a three-part analysis, examines the worsened situation in Darfur and identifies a narrow window of opportunity to implement Plan A by re-activating the Darfur peace process and by pushing for UN peacekeepers. The second message will review the two years since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and suggest how to address security problems and to prepare for the national elections due within two years. The third message will look at U.S. relations with Sudan, in particular with the government of President Omer al-Bashir, and describe how choices made or pending can affect Sudan's chances of transformation into a stable partner for security and peace in a very troubled region. End Summary.

Seeking an End to the Humanitarian Crisis in Darfur

¶2. (C) The fundamental U.S. policy goal in Darfur is humanitarian: to stop the displacement and killing of civilians, to provide food for their hunger and balm for their wounds, and to open the way for safe return home. However, with 2 million of the 6 million inhabitants now in IDP camps, security clashes throughout the territory, even in the three state capitals, and spreading chaos at all levels of society, Sudan is a failing state in Darfur. To end the humanitarian crisis, these trends must reverse. In the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), political dialogue and increased security, especially the disarmament of the janjaweed militias, were the key elements. What has happened since the signature of the DPA in Abuja last May 5? Are political dialogue and increased security still the keys to an improved humanitarian situation?

Darfur Peace Agreement: A Table with Two Legs

¶3. (C) In Abuja, Nigerian President Obasanjo, who hosted the peace talks, and Deputy Secretary Zoellick worked to secure the signatures of the four negotiating parties. The Government of Sudan and the Sudan Liberation Army,s (SLA) Minni Minawi agreed, with reservations. The SLA,s Abdel Wahid, the iconic representative of the Fur tribe, rejected the text in a last minute reversal that Libya, Chad, or Eritrea might have instigated. Khalil Ibrahim, leader of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), stonewalled, and Obasanjo ordered him out of the negotiating room. With only two of the four negotiating parties signing, the DPA was born in need of life support.

¶4. (C) Between May and October, hopes collapsed that the DPA would bring peace to Darfur. When in late May Lakhdar

Brahimi, on behalf of UN Secretary General Annan, met with Bashir and his top lieutenants, already the mood had soured. Brahimi judged Bashir might block UN peace-keeping in Darfur. Meanwhile, Abdel Wahid was avoiding further negotiations and exiled himself in Eritrea. Tensions mounted in Darfur,s IDP camps, where residents thought that the DPA was a raw deal because Abdel Wahid had rejected it. Khalil Ibrahim, joined by dissidents from the Abdel Wahid and Minnawi factions, founded the &National Redemption Front8 (NRF) with a program that rejected both the DPA and a cease-fire. In June, UN DPKO,s Jean-Marie Guehenno and the AU,s Said Djinnit led an assessment mission to Darfur, and they recommended transfer of peace-keeping from the 5,000 troop AU force to a 17,000 UN force, supplemented by 3,500 police and 4,000 civilians. Then Bashir announced he would oppose UN peacekeepers in Darfur at all costs.

Bashir's Plan for Security in Darfur: Open Militarization

¶5. (C) On July 6 President Bashir met UN SYG Annan at the African Union summit. He had his own plan to implement the DPA; he rejected any role for the UN, but would permit a continued role for the AU. He complained that the international community had done nothing to &punish8 Abdel Wahid, Khalil Ibrahim, and others for rejecting the DPA. Previously, on advice from Vice President Taha, Bashir had welcomed international cooperation in ending the war in Southern Sudan and had asked for USG help in the Abuja negotiations. Now, pushing Taha aside, he turned toward his generals and security chiefs for advice. Bashir,s plan was a unilateral, military strategy. He would send more battalions to Darfur, counter-attack rebel forces active in North Darfur, and crush any rebel movement toward South

KHARTOUM 00000094 002 OF 003

Darfur. He outright rejected the UN plan for 17,000 peace-keepers.

¶6. (C) Responding to this change of strategy, the UN Security Council adopted a different course of action in UNSCR 1706. Adding to tasks the DPA gave to AU peace-keepers, the Security Council mandated the proposed UN mission to protect civilians, to train the police, and to accomplish other reforms. When Bashir again rejected a UN force, the African Union decided, with donor support, to continue for another three months. Bashir,s generals now launched their campaign to pacify Darfur.

¶7. (C) The Sudanese army,s October/December campaign failed. Rebels, stocked with supplies and arms by Libya and Chad, recruited forces, attacked Sudanese army convoys, and caused havoc across North Darfur. They struck deep into South Darfur. Weapons given by the government to its Arab tribal allies were turned at times against government forces. Army reinforcements sent from Khartoum were quickly demoralized. Bashir,s unilateral plan flopped. The ensuing chaos spawned attacks on humanitarian operations. By the end of the year, chronic insecurity and dislocation of the civilian population spread across Darfur.

Divide and Conquer Pursued, Rather than Political Solution

¶8. (C) Both the government and rebel leaders avoided any political dialogue. Bashir,s lead Darfur adviser, Majzoub al-Khalifa, tried to buy off rebel commanders one-by-one, a strategy with no prospect of political closure. The UN lacked a forum to promote dialogue; the AU had a forum, but made no effort. A plethora of proposals to restart dialogue (some backed by governments, such as Libya and Eritrea, with a questionable track record) produced diplomatic gridlock.

Now Push UN Peace-Keepers Forward

¶9. (C) In early November, UN SYG Annan asked key stakeholder governments to meet with him at African Union headquarters to break the impasse. He put forward his &three-phase plan⁸: the light package (185 personnel) already accepted by Bashir; a heavy package (2,000-3,000 personnel) designed to strengthen the AU force over six months; and a &hybrid operation,⁸ funded through the UN, that would include AU and UN troops. Special Envoy Andrew Natsios and China,s UN PR Wang Guangya pushed Annan,s package forward. A carefully worded communique recorded Khartoum,s acceptance of the three-phase plan and mandated the AU and UN to restart political dialogue with non-signatories. Two weeks later, Bashir accepted a nuanced communique issued by the AU Peace and Security Council, while still refusing to let any UN peace-keepers into Darfur with their famous blue berets.

¶10. (C) Perhaps Bashir was bluffing, accepting agreement with no intention of allowing implementation. Annan,s plan was a wedge tactic, suggesting a small step and a medium step before full deployment. To call Bashir,s bluff, in mid-December Natsios met Bashir to push for immediate deployment of the 185 member light package, with their blue berets, early agreement on deployment of the 2,000-3,000 member heavy package, and an easing of restrictions on humanitarian operations in Darfur. Bashir agreed. Before the end of the month, the first elements of the light package had deployed, with their blue berets, and the UN and AU were preparing details of the heavy package for presentation to the Sudanese government. The onus was now on the UN to deploy its forces.

¶11. (C) In order to keep pressure on Bashir, the United Nations must push forward with its wedge tactics on both peace-keeping and on political dialogue. By the end of January, half of the 185-member light package should deploy to Darfur, and by the end of February the full package should be in place (if the UN can expedite recruitment of personnel). In their planned January 29 meeting, UN SYG Ban and President Bashir should resolve any remaining dispute over elements of the 2,000-3,000 member heavy package. Only if full agreement is reached now can this package, which requires construction of new facilities and expanded logistic support, fully deploy before the end of the AU peacekeeping mandate on June 30. The USG and other donors must give strong support to meet this target date.

¶12. (C) For the hybrid operation to begin on July 1, no later than March 1 the UN, AU, and Sudanese government must agree

KHARTOUM 00000094 003 OF 003

on specifics to permit time for recruitment of peace-keeping units and construction of operating bases. President Bashir still insists that all peace-keeping battalions come from Africa, although he accepts UN/AU figures on overall force size (15,000-20,000) and agrees that support units (logistics, command and control, intelligence, transport, e.g.) can come from elsewhere. However, African countries can at most provide only 10,000 troops meeting minimum UN standards, and this figure may be reduced by the number of African troops that deploy to Somalia. In other words, deployment of the hybrid operation could begin with troops from Africa, but at some early point Sudan would have to accept non-African troops. Bashir must be pushed on the issue of command authority, upon which UN financing depends.

Start a Renewed Dialogue with DPA Non-Signatories

¶13. (C) On the political track, the Ban/Bashir meeting on January 29 is a crucial moment for renewing dialogue involving non-signatories, which must go forward in parallel with improved peace-keeping. Given the setbacks of the last six months, Bashir should be urged to welcome a strong

international role, reversing his turn earlier toward a unilateral, military approach. Bashir has recently said he was willing to sit and negotiate with the rebels, as long as the talks were within the framework of the DPA and to adjust the implementation of the DPA to bring non-signatories on board. The UN and AU are now trying to facilitate a meeting of rebel commanders in Darfur. Meanwhile, rebels who reject political compromise, including the JEM's Khalil Ibrahim, are planning a contrary gathering in Chad. UN SYG Ban should ask Bashir to agree on a specific target date for discussions with non-signatories, perhaps no later than March 15.

¶14. (C) Although the November 16 Addis Ababa communique gave the lead on negotiations to the AU and UN, other stakeholders, led by the United States, need to be active in pushing for flexibility on sticking points. Key issues include: compensation -- especially what financial and material support will be available to IDPs so that they can return home and restart their lives; disarmament of the janjaweed and other militias in Darfur; security arrangements, including absorption of militias into the Sudanese armed forces; and, standing up the institutions specified in the DPA and allotting jobs among rebel factions. One way to focus the political dialogue would be for the AU and UN to convene a DPA review conference to coincide with the May anniversary of the Abuja Agreement.

¶15. (C) Attitudes have changed since September, when Bashir rejected UN SCR 1706 and launched his military campaign in Darfur. Confronted by military setbacks and pressed by the international community, Bashir accepted a UN role in Darfur. With the exception of the JEM's Khalil Ibrahim, the rebels outside the DPA, although enjoying intermittent military success, may now want political dialogue. Now the international community has an opening to push, again, for a cooperative approach that gives the priority to political dialogue, with international facilitation, and a strong peace-keeping force as the best way to protect civilians in Darfur and to disarm the militias. Because the main U.S. interest in Darfur is humanitarian, the right course is to test Bashir's changed attitude by pushing for political dialogue and UN peace-keeping. Moreover, a sharply confrontational approach on Darfur could damage U.S. policies to promote the peace with Southern Sudan and to transform politics in Khartoum.

HUME